

**Video
Transcript**

TRANSCRIPT

The Risks of Using Untrained Interpreters

In this video, the physician, a middle-aged African American female, is about to see Mr. Gonzalez, a middle-aged Hispanic man who has come to the doctor's office because of some back pain. An interpreter is sitting in the room with the patient to assist with the translation.

In this video, Mr. Gonzalez is speaking in Spanish; the physician is speaking in English and the interpreter is the one interpreting for them.

The physician enters the examining room holding Mr. Gonzalez's file.

Physician: Okay. Well, let's see. Who do we have here?

Interpreter: This is Mr. Gonzalez. He's saying he's having pain in his waist.

Physician: Okay. Well, ask him to describe the pain.

Interpreter: The doctor wants to know where it hurts.

Mr.

Gonzalez: My lower back hurts, starting here, and then the pain runs down this side [*pointing at his right side*], down my leg. Sometimes, the whole area here [*Pointing at his right thigh*] goes numb. Sometimes, even my foot goes to sleep.

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Interpreter: He says it hurts all over his back and legs.

Physician: His back? I thought you said it was his waist.

Interpreter: Well, it hurts him everywhere back there.

Physician: Well, ask him when he gets the pain, does anything provoke it or alleviate it?

Interpreter: The doctor wants to know when it started.

Mr.

Gonzalez: I've had the pain for a number of years. Ever since that time on the farm when old man Murrilo fell out of that tree. He was getting down a beehive when his foot slipped and—boom! He fell. Me, well...I tried to pick him up, but I couldn't. He was so fat. And there he lay—dead. And that's when this pain started. Some say it's *susto*, and it could be, because the whole thing really affected me.

Interpreter rolls her eyes and seems nervous because of the amount of information Mr. Gonzalez is providing. Meanwhile, the doctor is contemplating Mr. Gonzalez's file and not paying attention to what he is saying

[Mr. Gonzalez continues] But others say no, it wasn't *susto*, but that the same evil that made him fall, rubbed off on me.

Physician is still looking at the Mr. Gonzalez's file and not listening to what he has to say.

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- Interpreter: Agh, he says he's had it for a long time. You know how hard these people work. He probably just strained a muscle or maybe it's arthritis. Maybe he needs some aspirin or may be you could prescribe him some prescriptions, strength-pain medication.
- Physician: Uh huh....Ask him if he is taking anything for the pain. Some analgesic maybe or an anti-inflammatory.
- Interpreter: And, are you taking anything for the pain?
- Mr.
Gonzalez: Well, I've been drinking some medicinal teas...and, now and then, a Tylenol.
- Interpreter: He says he is drinking tea and taking Tylenol.
- Physician: [*Looking at the interpreter and not Mr. Gonzalez.*] And does it help?
- Interpreter: [*Looks at Mr. Gonzalez, does not translate the question and immediately replies on his behalf.*] Not much.
- Physician: Well, ask him when it hurts more: at night, in the day, when he gets up, when he lays down?
- Interpreter: Does it hurt more at night or during the day?
- Mr.
Gonzalez: When I'm sitting and I try to get up, that's when it hurts.

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Interpreter: No, the doctor wants to know if it hurts more at night or during the day. Please just answer what she asks you.

Mr.

Gonzalez: [*Looks at the doctor surprised to hear what the interpreter just told him to do*] Well, I don't know...sometimes, it's during the day, and sometimes at night. But I can't stay sitting or standing for very long. And it hurts when I climb the stairs. And there are a lot of stairs where I live.

Interpreter: He says it hurts more during the day.

Physician: [*Addressing the interpreter and not Mr. Gonzalez*] Okay. Well, this is probably some kind of a muscular skeletal pain, but I'm gonna have to do a physical exam and maybe some tests to see what's going on.

Interpreter: Okay. Well, I have to get going. There's a long line at the check-in, and the other receptionist does not like it when I'm not there.

Mr. Gonzalez looks confused.

Interpreter: [*Stands up, shakes Mr. Gonzalez's hand while the doctor is still sitting down*] Mr. Gonzalez, I'm leaving. The doctor's going to examine you and then give you something for pain. If the doctor doesn't help you, call me and I'll give you the number of a good chiropractor who helped my brother. OK, well, see you later.